

NSC BRIEFING

7 June 1955

SOUTH VIETNAM

- I. Problem of rebellious sect forces apparently being successfully dealt with by force of arms.
 - A. Ba Cut, given to loud talks, has not moved to support his fellow Hoa Hao rebel, General Soai.
 - B. American observers discount possibility that French will resupply rebels.
 - C. Prospect is that Hoa Hao dissidents will soon be reduced from level of military to level of a police problem.
- II. Most pressing question elsewhere on horizon is problem of July 1955 talks with Viet Minh on 1956 all-Vietnam elections.
 - A. Viet Minh stepping up its campaign to put over its own interpretation of Geneva terms (see background).
 - B. Commander-in-chief Giap, on 22 May after Haiphong takeover, made speech citing "new phase" in struggle to implement Geneva agreement.
 1. Said most important problem in sight was to prepare for consultations to be held from 20 July onward, as specified by Geneva declarations.
 - C. Giap blasted alleged US effort to sabotage election plans; claimed Defense Secretary Wilson, on eve of Geneva, had made clear US intent to make Vietnam demarcation line permanent, like Korea.

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1. Giap praised French spokesmen for their assurances that Geneva terms would be faithfully adhered to.

D. At press conference in Hanoi on 6 June, Viet Minh Vice Premier (Pham Van Dong) cited Geneva terms in brushing aside question whether consultation conference might not be held.

1. Dong put French on notice, stating "the other signatory of the Geneva agreements, and the interested parties must execute their obligation."

E. Viet Minh spokesmen always take care to state that all guarantees necessary will be given to insure completely free elections.

1. London Daily Worker correspondent, Wilfred Burchett, [] stated at Bandung in April that Vietnam was one place where elections could be held on British model since Communists sure of winning.

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III. France, as Geneva signatory, showing concern regarding responsibilities contracted for.

A. French see Dien's proposed Saigon 4-Power Conference as good opportunity to put Western pressure on Vietnamese to take initiative regarding consultations with Viet Minh.

B. French suggest that Western powers at Saigon meet

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Molotov) make approach to two Vietnam parties or that ICC do so; French prefer former.

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IV. Dien government, meanwhile, apparently planning to use two arguments as basis for backing away from any talks with Viet Minh, at least in July.

- A. Main argument is that South Vietnam not a signatory to Geneva agreement, thus not bound by its terms.
- B. Other argument, or stall, is that only a popularly elected National Assembly--which will not come into existence before fall--can deal with such vital matters.
- C. In addition, Dien has recently linked the status of the French Expeditionary Corps to subject of elections.
- D. He regards it essential that Vietnamese sovereignty be unquestioned and complete before any declaration on free elections is made.
- E. At that time, Dien wants to fully dissociate his government from Geneva accords.
- F. He feels this necessary to prevent ICC, which he probably distrusts, from coming in and taking over election arrangements.

V. These South Vietnamese points will scarcely impress Viet Minh or--perhaps more importantly--the Indians.

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- A. Indian ICC chairman, on 31 May, said "if French had authority and it has passed to Vietnamese, the latter are responsible; but we do not know how much has passed to Vietnamese.
- B. Questioned on whether Vietnamese "automatically inherit" responsibility of Geneva signatory, Indian said that is legal question to be studied when it arises.
- C. Canadians on ICC take position that Commission members have no role regarding elections until both sides agreed on all details.
- D. But Indians, with support of Poles, unlikely to accept so passive a role.